

Approved Meeting Minutes

Middle School Building Committee Meeting

December 2, 2013 – 8:15 a.m.

BOE Conference Room, 3rd Floor Annex Building

5 Linsley Street, North Haven, CT

Committee Members in Attendance:

Goldie Adele, Michael Brandt, Miriam Brody, Lou Coppola, Sr., Gary Johns (committee chairman), Bruce Morris, Joseph Porto, Michelle Spader (committee secretary), Dyann Vissicchio (committee vice-chair)

Absent: Walter Nester, Jr.

Others in Attendance:

Kristine Carling, Dr. Robert Cronin, Jeffrey Donofrio, Phil Diana, David Mikos, Phil Piazza, Edward Swinkoski, Diversified Technology Consultants (DTC); Shay Atluru, Rick Morse, Perkins Eastman; Joe Costa, Fritz Morris

Meeting called to order at: 8:15 am by chairman, Gary Johns.

Motion to approve the minutes of November 18, 2013 meeting: Motion by Bruce Morris and seconded by Michael Brandt. The motion passed unanimously.

DTC & Perkins Eastman were invited back today so that we could further discuss the middle school options.

Chairman Johns opened the meeting by stating we have 3 options remaining – Renovate as new, new construction on Bailey Rd, and the hybrid, which is to ‘renovate as new’ the auditorium, cafeterias, music room and gymnasiums as well as constructing a new classroom wing. The chairman asked the administration to give their viewpoints on which option would be their preference.

Dr. Cronin expressed that his least favorite option is the ‘renovate as new’ due to the complications it presents in trying to renovate while students are in the building. The idea of building new has its appeal, but he is concerned about the proximity to Bailey Road and is concerned about the plan getting the support of the people that live in the neighborhood. He is also concerned about building the school three floors high and the area on which the school is proposed to be built. The hybrid is the option Dr. Cronin likes best. He likes that it maintains a campus atmosphere between the middle school and high school. That will not happen if a new school is built on Bailey Road. There would be a lot of distance between the two schools with the new school option. He also believes selecting the hybrid option

demonstrates to the community that we are trying to find middle ground by working with what we have and improving upon what we don't have.

Mr. Piazza says the 'renovate as new' option does not appeal to him at all because it will be very disruptive to the learning process. He feels that either the new school on Bailey or the hybrid are both good options. He feels that if the new school was selected they could come up with ways to work around the distance between the two schools so that the relationship between the middle school and high school is not affected. He also feels it is important that the community be able to see what their money was spent on, so the finished product is something the taxpayers can be proud of.

A general discussion followed. No one on the committee had anything favorable to say about the 'renovate as new' option and the option was eliminated. We now have two remaining options.

Dyann Vissicchio is concerned about the distance to the road with the 'new' option. She mentioned that she has been approached by citizens expressing their concern for a school build sixty feet from Bailey Road as well as having a three story building close to homes. She expressed that before we decide between the remaining two options, we must do our due diligence on the pros and cons of each of the remaining options.

Gary Johns utilized tools he has at his disposal and viewed aerial images of the property. There really isn't another location on that parcel of land where a substantial structure could be erected. We also need to be sensitive to those homes on the Valley Brook side of the property when we discuss potential placement of a three story classroom wing.

Miriam Brody also expressed that people that have approached her are not in favor of a three story building on Bailey Road. Those that have approached her feel it was more reasonable to look at the hybrid option.

Joseph Porto sought clarification from Mr. Piazza regarding his feelings on a three story academic wing. Mr. Piazza stated that it was his personal preference not to have a three story building because of the age group involved and the fact that it would require a separation of administrators and counselors by floor, as opposed to the cohesive group they currently have that are housed together. If a three story design was chosen, it would mean they would have to change the way they organize themselves and by no means did he want this issue to be considered a deciding factor. However, it would not be ideal. He hoped we could look at other alternatives to the three story design.

Lou Coppola added that a three story building would mean less foundation work, which would mean less cost than pouring a foundation for a one or two story building.

Michael Brandt expressed that we are not talking about a big difference in net cost between these final two options. We would be getting more reimbursement from the state with the hybrid option, but there is only \$1 million difference between the two remaining options. Ed Swinkoski said for every million dollar difference in cost it is approximately \$100,000 per year in debt (based on 15 year bonding). On a \$70 million budget it does not have a huge impact on mill rate.

Phil Diana mentioned that another potential drawback to the new build on Bailey Road would be the traffic flow and the problems that would be created along Bailey and Maple. If a school was erected sixty feet off Bailey Road, he believes the traffic issues would be even more significant than the issues that currently exist.

Bruce Morris looks at the remaining options from a construction point of view. He believes you get “more bang for your buck” with the new building, but understands the objections to the new build. He is concerned about the distance between the high school and the proposed site of the new middle school on Bailey Road as well as the construction of a three story building so close to Bailey Road. If we could devise a plan to move this proposed building further back from the road it would be ideal. He asked how far back the new school could be pushed, if that option is chosen. The new build also avoids a lot of the contamination issues that will be involved with renovation of the cafeterias, gymnasiums, etc. Morris likes the fact that we gain more fields (in the long run) if we build ‘new’.

Morris also feels strongly that the property need to be maintained after construction, since the building will be expected to last approximately 50 years. He does not like the use of air conditioning units on roofs because it makes it harder to maintain your roof and suggests that we look at using new technology such as geo-thermal heat pumps as opposed to boilers. He is unsure if these fixes could be done with the hybrid option, but would strongly suggest them if the brand new building was constructed.

Goldie Adele is torn between the hybrid and the new build. He thinks we should strongly consider the objections of the neighbors in our decision, therefore he is leaning toward the hybrid option.

Michelle Spader asked Mr. Piazza if we decided upon a two story building would there still be the need to separate administrators and counselors over the two floors. Mr. Piazza said yes there would have to be changes regardless of whether it was two or three floors. Spader said that if we chose the hybrid and opted for a two story academic wing, rather than a three story it would require a larger footprint. She questioned what it would take away from parking and fields in order to make this a two story wing, rather than a three story. Joe Costa said it would only be an additional 10-15,000 square feet. The space in front of the middle school looks large enough to support that additional area and parking could be shifted to the east in order to accommodate that larger footprint. Costa added they believe the two story option could work very well there. Fields would not be affected if changed from a three story to a two story footprint. No parking would be eliminated. It is merely a change in parking location. There would also still be a net increase in ball fields and no further displacement of existing ball fields. However, we do not know how much of a difference in cost there would be between a three story and a two story wing. That would need to be determined.

Spader also wanted to clarify that regardless of whether we choose the new building or the hybrid option, we will not be having a one story middle school in the future. Joe Costa agreed that was a fair statement. Spader is in favor of the hybrid option, but would like it to include a two story academic wing rather than a three story wing. She was concerned with a three story building from a security perspective and as it pertains to things such as emergency situations requiring evacuation. Mr. Piazza

also said a three story option would make them have to look at how they schedule classes, where the classes are, how they would keep an eye on multiple floors, as well as the safety issues with middle school age children going up and down multiple sets of stairs 7-8 times per day.

Shea Atluru mentioned that a one story school is no longer the norm. DTC hasn't seen one constructed in more than a decade. From a security perspective Atluru said a multi-story building is considered more defensible and easier to lock down than a sprawling school with many points of entry. Multi story allows for a tighter perimeter and cameras can take care of most of your entry doors. It is easier to have a visual on the entire footprint in Atluru and Costa's opinions. Costa also agreed with Coppola's comment in regards to efficiencies in construction of a three story building as opposed to a two story because you are stacking the stairs, etc. which lends to it being a more cost effective construction type.

Vissicchio questioned where the office would be located with the hybrid option. It was explained that the office would migrate with the new construction portion and the front door would be relocated near the classroom wing that was newly constructed. The office would end up being where most of the parking is relocated to and it would be configured in a way that provides the security, safety and supervision that is needed.

Vissicchio also revisited the topic of the environmental issues that were discussed at the last committee meeting. We would need to have the environmental testing done on the portions of the building that are being renovated. Therefore, we are not eliminating that risk. However, by eliminating the 'renovate as new' option we have reduced the amount of risk, since now only a smaller portion of the existing school must be mitigated. Vissicchio is concerned with mold and mildew in the current gymnasiums and what we may find when floors and ceilings are torn out. If we go with the new school, we still need to see what the historic use of that land was. Johns said that he had looked at town land records and found that the town bought the land from a member of the Bailey family in 1948. We do not know how many generations this land was in the Bailey family and we do not know what the land was used for. Spader questioned if prior to 1948 is on the land records. Johns said it should be, but he hasn't had the opportunity to research it any further back. Spader reiterated again that she firmly believes that phase 1 studies should be implemented before we decide on our design option. She stated that even if the Bailey family owned the land for generations prior, we don't know if they owned a factory on the property and it is vital to have this information prior to making our decision on which option to choose. Vissicchio agreed. Vissicchio researched CT towns such as Berlin and Wethersfield who had environmental issues that added substantial cost to their projects and one municipality that had to go back to the town to request additional funding. This is something Vissicchio would like to avoid, if at all possible.

Johns explained that January is the proposed month for a town meeting in order to go forward with the project. Therefore, the committee should choose their option in the month of December. Johns was looking to get a consensus from the committee as to which option they were leaning towards. However, the Ed Spec has still not been finalized. Dr. Cronin said there is a workshop scheduled for tomorrow night and hopefully it will be undergoing its final tweaking then.

Dyann Vissicchio and Lou Coppola both expressed that they don't feel they are able to make a decision today as to which option they would choose. Vissicchio would like slides depicting the pros and cons of each option before she can make a decision as to which option she favors, and Coppola agreed with that approach.

There was a discussion, along with a review of the slides, led by Shay Atluru and Rick Morse showing the aerial view of the various options we are considering and alternate approaches to building so close to Bailey Road as well as optimizing circulation around the building. Morse said the latest slides attempt to pull the new building as far back from the road as they can. It is reasonable to expect they may be able to pull the line back to 80-100 feet, but that would have to be proven out. The current high school is approximately 80-100 feet from the street line.

The loss of any current fields is very problematic. Although there is a gain in field space once the project is complete, we must recognize the needs in the interim. That is an issue that must be taken into consideration. A discussion ensued in regards to which fields would be affected, where fields could be relocated, what type of fields would be needed, etc.

Spader expressed a concern about the substantial distance there would be between the new middle school and existing high school. She found the idea of a single drop off point, as it exists today, unsatisfactory. It was discussed that there would have to be drop off at both the high school and the middle school. A bus loop was developed in one of the plans shown that would make drop off at each of the schools achievable.

Vissicchio questioned how much money is allotted for fields in the hybrid option. It is listed as \$327,000 and it is explained that money is to resurface the track which is at the end of its useful life and to turn the roughly 7 acres of land into usable fields.

After listening to all of the discussion, Mr. Piazza now feels that the hybrid option is a better solution because we do not have to deal with the field disruptions, and all the issues presented with a building close to the road.

Kristine Carling spoke about language in the Ed Spec that Attorney Donofrio advised be included as well as a field house component being added into the plan. Mike Brandt asked if this field house would include meeting rooms and Carling explained that it was being kept very basic as not to greatly impact costs. Diana added that the storage bins that currently house sports equipment as well as a rental space that houses all the maintenance equipment for the fields would be eliminated and a basic field house constructed in order to house all of this items. It was explained that the condition of the storage pods have greatly deteriorated and they are spending a lot of money to buy new equipment each year, since items are being damaged by rodents, etc. where they are stored.

Bruce Morris asked where the staging area for this construction project would be located. Laydown areas would need to be established. Potential staging areas for the two remaining building options were provided on the slides presented.

Joseph Porto wanted clarification regarding the rehab of the music room space. Atluru explained that area would require asbestos tile removal and would include significant renovation. Costa added that it will feel like new – acoustics, lighting, air conditioning, etc. – all the way down to the door knobs and anything else that did not meet current Ed Spec requirements. If Ed Spec requires the room to be bigger, it would be enlarged. If more windows are required, they would be added. At the end of the renovation it would feel like a new structure.

Bruce Morris asked if the committee could meet next week, rather than wait two weeks to reconvene. Chairman Johns agreed that the committee could reconvene in one week to discuss the list of pros and cons for the remaining two options, as well as giving DTC/Perkins Eastman the opportunity to proof out the ability to push the building on Bailey as far back from the road as feasible in order to make it as 'neighborhood friendly' as possible. Therefore, the next meeting will be held on Monday, December 9, 2013 at 8:15 am.

Motion to adjourn at 9:29 am by Dyann Vissicchio. Seconded by Bruce Morris.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Spader, Committee Secretary